

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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SUBJ: ROK FONMIN ON TRIPARTITE TALKS

REF: SEOUL 2995 (DTG 120922Z APR 78)

1. SUMMARY: AS OF C.O.B. THURSDAY, ROK FOREIGN MINISTER HAD NOT REJECTED TRIPARTITE TALKS (SOUTH KOREA/NORTH KOREA/US) ON REUNIFICATION. BURIED IN ALL REITERATION OF ROKG'S STANDARD CALLS FOR TWO- OR FOUR-PARTY TALKS WAS BOTTOM LINE: IT'S TOO EARLY TO DECIDE. END SUMMARY.

2. ON APRIL 12, KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER PAK TONG-CHIN MADE COMMENTS ON PROPOSALS FOR TRIPARTITE TALKS IN HIS APPEARANCE BEFORE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. PAK POINTED OUT THAT, FROM NEWS REPORTS, ROKG UNDERSTANDS THAT TRIPARTITE TALKS WERE RAISED AT CARTER-TITO MEETING IN EARLY MARCH, BUT IT IS UNCLEAR WHO RAISED THE TOPIC. FOREIGN MINISTER REVEALED THAT ROKG HAS ASKED USG FOR DETAILS, BUT HAS NOT YET RECEIVED A CLEAR EXPLANATION OF THE
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GOALS OR MODALITIES OF THE PROPOSED TALKS. AFFIRMING THAT ROKG MUST PREPARE ITS COUNTERMEASURES FIRMLY AND RESOLUTELY, PAK NOTED THAT JULY 4 (1972) JOINT COMMUNIQUE IS STILL IN EFFECT, SINCE "NORTHERN PUPPETS" HAVE NEVER REPUDIATED IT, AND ISSUED ANOTHER CALL TO NORTH TO RE-OPEN SOUTH-NORTH DIALOGUE IMMEDIATELY. FOREIGN MINISTER EMPHASIZED THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE

AT ALL IN ROKG'S POSITION ON THE REUNIFICATION OF KOREA
-- GOVERNMENT HOLDS THAT UNIFICATION MUST BE REALIZED
THROUGH DIALOGUE BETWEEN SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA, AND
THAT IT WOULD BE MOST RATIONAL, REALISTIC, AND PRODUCTIVE
TO EXPAND THE ARMISTICE TALKS INTO FOUR-PARTY TALKS.
FONMIN DID NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF TRIPARTITE TALKS
AND SPECIFICALLY DISCOUNTED POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH DIS-
CUSSIONS COULD LEAD TO REPETITION OF VIETNAM TRAGEDY,
POINTING TO CLEAR DIFFERENCE IN POPULAR ATTITUDES AND
GROWING STRENGTH OF ROK.

3. ON APRIL 13, SECOND DAY OF COMMITTEE'S HEARINGS FOREIGN
MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED SUBJECT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITH US
BUT CONTENTS CAN'T BE REVEALED UNDER DIPLOMATIC PRACTICES.
HE SAID THE PLAN SEEMS TO BE A SIMPLE ONE, BUT IT IS STILL
TOO EARLY TO MAKE A DECISION. PAK DID EMPHASIZE ROKG'S
DESIRE FOR BILATERAL TALKS WITH NORTH, COMMENTED ON
TRENDS FAVORABLE TO ROK IN CONFRONTATION WITH NORTH
(INCREASED SUPPORT FROM NON-ALIGNED NATIONS), AND AGAIN
URGED NORTH TO RE-OPEN DIALOGUE WITH SOUTH. YI YONG-HUI,
MINISTER OF NATIONAL UNIFICATION BOARD, ALSO STATED THAT
IT'S TOO EARLY TO JUDGE NORTH'S DIPLOMATIC MOVES FOR
TRIPARTITE TALKS.

4. KOREA HERALD EDITOR CONFIRMED TO EMBASSY OFFICER
APRIL 13 THAT ROKG IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING TRIPARTITE
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TALKS, WEIGHING THE RISKS INHERENT IN ACCEPTING SUCH A
FORUM AGAINST THE COST TO ROK FLEXIBLE IMAGE IN OTHER
COUNTRIES IF SEOUL REJECTS THE IDEA.
SNEIDER

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